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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES LATEST EFFORTS TO  
SUPPORT AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES**

*BACP releases small business scorecard, Kenya Merritt named Chief Small Businesses Officer, convenes Mayor's Business Council*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the City of Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) today announced new efforts to support entrepreneurs and growing small businesses across Chicago. BACP today released the first Chicago Small Business Scorecard, highlighting the City's efforts over the past seven years to modernize and streamline business processes, improve access to capital and provide technical expertise and education to help residents start and grow their small businesses. BACP today also welcomed Kenya Merritt as the City's Chief Small Business Officer to lead the City's efforts to help businesses in every corner of the city get the resources they need to launch and grow.

"Small businesses are the backbone of Chicago's economy, providing jobs for Chicago residents and economic growth for Chicago neighborhoods," said Mayor Emanuel. "We are fortunate to welcome Kenya Merritt as our city's new Chief Small Business officer. Kenya has the experience and expertise to support small businesses across Chicago and help local entrepreneurs achieve their dreams."

The first Chicago Small Business Scorecard provides a clear picture of the degree to which we have removed obstacles for business owners. The Scorecard demonstrates the positive impact that these changes are having and allows the City to track and expand the initiatives that are working. The Scorecard highlights initiatives have been underway since 2011 and include the following highlights:

- 117 business licenses have been reduced to 40
- 10,000 businesses have seen a reduction in license fees
- 2,000 businesses have seen a reduction in required inspections
- 286 business owners have received microloans through the Chicago Microlending Institute
- More than 100 business owners have received grants totaling over \$10 million from Neighborhood Opportunity Fund and Retail Thrive Zones
- 3,400 business owners applied for their license online in 2017
- 14,400 retail food applicants received a health consultation at the one-stop-shop
- Issuance time for sign permits have been decreased by 63 days
- 19,000 business-owners have received free trainings offered by the City

“The hiring of Kenya Merritt was a priority for BACP and evidence of our commitment to support business,” said BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareno. “Kenya is a change agent, a strong manager who can build relationships, listen to an assortment of ideas and transform them into programs that benefit communities in every corner of our city.”

As BACP’s Chief Small Business Officer, Merritt is responsible for small business public engagement, educational program development and streamlining business interactions with the City. She will also lead the Neighborhood Business Development Centers (NBDC), connecting BACP with external partners and to the community. As part of Merritt’s first actions, she will be convening the Chicago Mayor’s Business Council, a group of over 25 business owners representing all industries and geographies in the City. This Council, which hosted the inaugural kick-off today at City Hall, will meet regularly and serve to provide ongoing feedback for the Mayor’s small business initiatives in the fast-changing business landscape.

“Working together with businesses, residents, local aldermen and chambers of commerce we are making it easier for businesses to thrive,” said Merritt, “We are committed to making Chicago the most business-friendly city in the country.”

Nowhere is the shift more dramatic than the move from brick-and-mortar to online and paperless. The City is committed to the following initiatives that will help us adapt to the changing business climate and continue to be a partner, not a problem, for new businesses:

- Online payment of tickets for 10 types of business violations, eliminating the need to hire an attorney and come to City Hall for an administrative hearing
- Expanding on our paperless initiative to offer all processing services online, on one website with no visit to City Hall required
- Creating a pop-up business permit to streamline the process for entrepreneurs to experiment with new locations and activate underutilized storefronts
- Reducing the licensing burden for certain types of businesses that face significant challenges

With more than 18 years of experience in government services with the City of Chicago, Kenya Merritt brings a wealth of experience in building relationships, fiscal and administration management, partnering with residents and implementing programs that lead to economic growth in neighborhoods. She previously worked as Deputy Commissioner with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Family and Support Services as well as the Office of Budget and Management. In each of her roles, Kenya has worked to improve communities by forging partnerships with individuals, organizations and businesses to provide a variety of programs that range from business to arts and culture. Merritt is a Chicago native, raised in Lawndale and currently residing in the Austin neighborhood.

This announcement comes the same week as Mayor Emanuel announced the second round of investments in neighborhood businesses through the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund. Twenty-five small businesses, selected from a pool of more than 800 applicants, received funding through the initiative, which generates funds from downtown development projects to support commercial corridor growth on Chicago’s South, Southwest and West Sides. The Neighborhood Opportunity Fund is financed by voluntary contributions from downtown construction projects. Grant recipients

will be using awards for a range of costs involving building rehabilitation and repairs, small business owner training and coaching, local hiring subsidies and related needs. In its first 18 months, the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund has received more than \$47.8 million in commitments from 24 downtown construction projects. Another \$60 million in commitments from 23 projects are pending formal approval.

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